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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 2nd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 2 October 2017, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Expression of condolences in connection with the recent terrorist attack in the United States of America

1. **The Chair** offered condolences to the families of the victims of the tragic terrorist attack carried out in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Agenda item 58: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations (A/72/23 (chaps. V and XIII) and A/72/62)

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Agenda item 61: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/72/66/Rev.1 and A/72/66/Add.1)

Agenda item 62: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other agenda items*) (A/72/23 (chaps. VIII, IX, X, XI and XIII), A/72/346 and A/72/74)

2. **The Chair** said that decolonization had been one of the defining issues since the establishment of the United Nations thanks to its untiring efforts and, in particular, those of its Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Special Committee on decolonization). The Special Committee had played a crucial role in advancing the decolonization process by providing a forum in which the voices of individuals from around the world could be heard and validated and creating a space for political dialogue with the administering Powers. The Special Committee's work had been one of the hallmarks of the Organization's success since its inception. Although the Special Committee had fulfilled its mandate in many ways, its task was not yet complete.

3. **Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic), Rapporteur of the Special Committee on decolonization, introducing the report of the Special Committee on its work in 2017 (A/72/23), said that chapter I provided a general account of the Special Committee's activities during its 2017 session and its plans for future work. Chapters II to XII focused on specific themes and on the individual situations in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, while chapter XIII contained the Special Committee's recommendations to the General Assembly in the form of draft resolutions. In addition, the report contained the report of the 2017 Caribbean regional seminar, held in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

4. During its substantive session in June 2017, the Special Committee had continued to analyse developments in the 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, guided by the principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, relevant resolutions and the goals of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, which reaffirmed the Special Committee's vital role in advancing the decolonization agenda. The Special Committee had also held its Caribbean regional seminar, which had focused on ways to advance the decolonization agenda before the end of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

5. **Ms. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba), speaking as Vice-Chair of the Special Committee on decolonization, said that, during its 2017 session, the Special Committee had continued to monitor implementation of the Declaration for the 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. At its Caribbean regional seminar, implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and its overlap with the plan of action for the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism had been among the main topics of discussion. The link between the decolonization process and the Sustainable Development Goals would be of particular importance for the development prospects of post-colonial political entities and the challenges those entities would face after the change in territorial status. Moreover, the administering Powers had a responsibility to implement the Goals in the Non-Self-Governing Territories under their rule, on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the 2030 Agenda's imperative to leave no one behind.

6. The participation of the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Fund and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean constituted a significant advance in terms of

the involvement of United Nations system entities in the work of the Special Committee. The regional seminar had also provided an opportunity to assess the Special Committee's mandate and exchange ideas on how the Special Committee could improve its work in the scant three years remaining in the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

7. At its formal session in June 2017, the Special Committee had been honoured by the historic visit of Puerto Rican independence leader Oscar López Rivera, whose sentence had been commuted after 36 years in United States prisons. Substantive advances had been made in the language of resolutions concerning Territories, and a call had been issued for administering Powers to put an end to military activities in the Territories under their control. Lively debates had taken place with the participation of concerned parties, Member States, experts and civil society representatives. In line with the Special Committee's practice, all resolutions and decisions had been adopted by consensus.

8. The Territory of French Polynesia had participated at both the regional seminar and the substantive session for the first time since its relisting as a Non-Self-Governing Territory in 2013. All Territories should make their urgent needs and accomplishments known first-hand by participating in the forums provided by the Special Committee. Similarly, administering Powers should maintain a more active presence in the Special Committee's activities.

9. The International Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories had been commemorated in June 2017. An exhibition entitled "Decolonization: Time is running out" had stressed the need for Member States to uphold their commitments under the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolutions by accelerating the decolonization process. In July 2017, the Chair of the Special Committee had participated in the coordination and management meeting of the Economic and Social Council at which the Council had adopted a resolution on the vital support extended to Non-Self-Governing Territories by the United Nations system. With regard to the future activities of the Special Committee, the Bureau would meet with the Secretary-General to inform him of recent developments, and informal consultations would be held with administering Powers and other concerned parties. Furthermore, the Special Committee would conduct visiting missions to Non-Self-Governing Territories on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with its mandate. Such missions provided an effective way for the Special Committee to assess the situation in the Territories.

10. While the task of achieving decolonization was an arduous one, Special Committee members were committed to enhancing the efforts to ensure a successful end to the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. She thanked Fourth Committee members and the various relevant United Nations Secretariat departments for their tireless efforts and called on all Special Committee members to redouble their efforts and ensure that indifference, petty interests or ill-conceived neutrality did not interfere with their duty to put an end to the scourge of colonialism by means of diplomacy, negotiations and multilateralism.

11. **Mr. Jaime Calderón** (El Salvador), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that all peoples should be able to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. CELAC remained fully committed to the goal of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and called on the administering Powers to cooperate with the Special Committee and to adopt the measures necessary to attain the rapid decolonization of each of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, some of which were in the CELAC region, while taking the individual situations of the Territories into account, including the fact that some of them were "special and particular" colonial situations involving sovereignty disputes. The administering Powers should regularly communicate accurate information on each of the Territories under their administration. At the January 2017 CELAC Summit, the Heads of State and Government of the Community had renewed their commitment to continue working to make Latin America and the Caribbean a region free of colonialism.

12. CELAC supported the work of the Department of Public Information, including the use of the six official languages on the decolonization website, but stressed the importance of ensuring that content was regularly updated in all languages. It appreciated the measures taken to provide coverage of Special Committee meetings on United Nations Web TV in 2017 and urged the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Public Information to ensure the widest dissemination of information on decolonization, including the coverage of all meetings of the Special Committee.

13. CELAC strongly supported the legitimate rights of the Argentine Republic in the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. At the 2017 CELAC Summit, the States members of the Community had reaffirmed their abiding interest in the resumption of negotiations by the Governments of the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom in order to find, as soon as possible, a peaceful and definitive solution to the dispute, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the Organization of American States. They had also called on the Secretary-General of the United Nations, once again, to renew his efforts to fulfil the mission of good offices entrusted to him by the General Assembly with a view to the resumption of negotiations, and to report on the progress made. CELAC further reiterated the importance of observing General Assembly resolution 31/49 calling on both parties to refrain from taking decisions that would imply introducing unilateral modifications in the situation, and highlighted the full willingness of the Argentine Government to set in place arrangements for the resumption of dialogue aimed at reaching a peaceful and definitive solution to the sovereignty dispute.

14. With regard to the Special Committee's 36 resolutions and decisions on Puerto Rico reaffirming the inalienable right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination and independence, the Heads of State and Government of CELAC had highlighted the Latin American and Caribbean character of Puerto Rico at the 2017 Summit and had recalled the Havana Declaration of 2014 calling for progress on the question of Puerto Rico. CELAC commended the amnesty recently granted by the United States to the independence leader Oscar López Rivera.

15. Continued efforts were needed to facilitate the sustained and balanced growth of the fragile economies of the small island Territories of the Caribbean and the Pacific. Those Territories should be allowed to exercise their right to self-determination and the administering Powers should not thwart the will of those peoples. CELAC remained concerned at the situation in the Turks and Caicos Islands, and underscored the need for the people of that Territory to participate meaningfully in determining their own future. Special attention should be paid to key issues affecting small islands, such as accelerating loss of territory owing to natural disasters and rising sea levels resulting from climate change.

16. CELAC endorsed all resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council regarding Western Sahara, including General Assembly resolution 70/98, and reiterated its strong support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara to reach a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution leading to the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).

17. **Mr. Rosselli** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), said that colonialism violated the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and hindered the social, cultural and economic development of dependent peoples. It was therefore unacceptable that, in the twenty-first century, 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories remained, and Member States should intensify efforts to bring an end to colonialism in all its forms.

18. The historical and legal aspects of the question of the Malvinas Islands ruled out any solution based on the principle of self-determination, as had been initially recognized in General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX). In a 2016 declaration, UNASUR had reiterated its support for the legitimate sovereignty rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, as well as the region's abiding interest in the resumption of negotiations between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom in order to find, as soon as possible, a peaceful and definitive solution to the sovereignty dispute in accordance with relevant international resolutions. That declaration had also highlighted the ongoing constructive attitude and willingness of the Argentine Government to negotiate a definitive solution.

19. UNASUR reaffirmed all United Nations resolutions on Western Sahara and supported the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to achieve a political solution and facilitate the exercise of self-determination. Lastly, the States members of UNASUR, as part of the Latin American and Caribbean region, affirmed the inalienable right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination and independence and called on the General Assembly to review the colonial question of Puerto Rico in a comprehensive manner.

20. Speaking in his national capacity, he said that Uruguay defended the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination. Talks between Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y

de Río de Oro (Frente Polisario) must be resumed as soon as possible, in good faith and with a view to achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that provided for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations and relevant United Nations resolutions. His delegation supported the efforts of the Secretary-General and his new Personal Envoy in that connection.

21. Uruguay fully supported the legitimate sovereignty rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. Such claims were historically, legally and geographically justified. Successive General Assembly and Special Committee resolutions had defined the sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom as a special and particular colonial situation which could be resolved only through a negotiated peaceful solution between the two countries. It was therefore essential for the two parties to resume negotiations to find a just, peaceful and lasting solution to the dispute in line with the relevant resolutions and declarations of the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

22. **Mr. Vieira** (Brazil), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and associated States, said that the Presidents of the Southern Common Market States and associated States had reaffirmed their support for the legitimate rights of the Argentine Republic over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas in the joint communiqué adopted on 21 July 2017 at the fiftieth meeting of the Council of the Common Market and MERCOSUR Presidential Summit. In the communiqué, the Presidents had recalled that a prompt resolution of the sovereignty dispute, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and the declarations of the Organization of American States and other regional and multilateral forums, was in the interests of the entire region. They also noted that the adoption of unilateral measures was incompatible with the relevant United Nations resolutions. MERCOSUR and its associated States highlighted the permanent willingness of the Argentine Government to identify areas for cooperation with the Government of the United Kingdom, with a view to creating an environment conducive to the resumption of negotiations on sovereignty.

23. Speaking in his national capacity, he said that the Government of Brazil maintained its long-standing support for the legitimate rights of Argentina in relation to the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. As the "special and particular" colonial situation in question was a sovereignty dispute that had lasted for nearly 200 years, the principle of self-determination was not applicable. In that regard, it was important to recall that the British population on the Islands had been implanted during an illegal occupation. Furthermore, since the Malvinas formed part of the territory of Argentina, the principle of territorial integrity was applicable. Brazil therefore called on both parties to resume negotiations. In a spirit of solidarity, and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 31/49, Brazil did not authorize the use of its ports or airports by vessels or aircraft heading to the Malvinas Islands, as that could imply introducing unilateral modifications in the situation.

24. **Ms. Beckles** (Trinidad and Tobago) said that the continued existence of colonialism in any form was an impediment to the economic, social and cultural development of dependent territories. It was clear that the world envisioned in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its aim of leaving no one behind, could not become a reality if colonialism continued to perpetuate its legacy of inequality and injustice. The Organization's active support and vigilance through the Fourth Committee had been instrumental in her country's self-determination and that of many others. However, the Special Committee's agenda remained unfinished and Member States should not forget that their task was not yet completed. It was a matter of concern that 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories still did not have a voice in deciding their own future and that, furthermore, six of them were located in the Caribbean, impeding regional integration.

25. While certain internal reforms had been enacted in several Territories, little progress had been made in actual decolonization consistent with the recognized political status options of independence, free association or integration. The affirmations of support and annual adoption of resolutions were not sufficient if the decolonization mandates were not implemented. For its part, Trinidad and Tobago was committed to ensuring that tangible achievements were made towards the goal of eradicating colonialism. Her Government maintained its long-standing support for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. It welcomed the appointment of the new Personal Envoy of the

Secretary-General, commended the efforts of his predecessor and looked forward to supporting efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement under the auspices of the United Nations. Trinidad and Tobago also supported the activities of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) and the Security Council's call, in resolution 2351 (2017), for continued negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations without preconditions and in good faith. It encouraged the parties to support the objectives of MINURSO and to continue negotiating in a spirit of compromise and sincere commitment with the goal of achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution. Member States could not afford to continue to pay the price of constant repetition without achieving concrete results in the decolonization process.

26. **Mr. Al Habib** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the international community must engage actively to eradicate all forms of colonialism, including political, social, cultural and economic exploitation. To that end, the United Nations and other international organizations should take effective measures to speed up the decolonization process in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions and the Charter of the United Nations. Furthermore, the administering Powers should promote the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, as such advancement during the decolonization process was a prerequisite for any decision to change their status.

27. His delegation was concerned at the exploitation of the natural resources of the Non-Self-Governing Territories by administering Powers, and recalled that the latter should avoid any activities that could adversely affect the environment, health, cultural heritage or economic development of the peoples under their administration. The administering Powers had the duty under the Charter of the United Nations to protect the human and natural resources of Non-Self-Governing Territories against any abuse. Moreover, those Powers should pay full compensation for any economic, social or cultural repercussions of their occupation. The administering Powers should cooperate with the Special Committee by facilitating visiting missions in the Territories under their administration. In addition, they should ensure the timely submission of information in accordance with Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations to assist the Secretariat in its preparation of working papers on the Territories concerned.

28. **Mr. Mendoza-García** (Costa Rica) said that it was astonishing that 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories were still on the Special Committee's list. His delegation trusted that the Special Committee would use the best means to ensure implementation of the Declaration on decolonization, the provisions of relevant General Assembly resolutions and the measures approved in the context of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. The regional seminars and visiting missions were of critical importance as they allowed the Special Committee to analyse the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and disseminate information on the challenges faced.

29. Costa Rica recognized the sovereign rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, and the legitimate Argentine claim had been supported by various General Assembly resolutions. The parties should begin negotiations, as soon as possible, with a view to finding a definitive and peaceful solution to the prolonged dispute. The joint communiqué issued by Argentina and the United Kingdom on 13 September 2016 reflected efforts made by both parties to improve conditions for dialogue. The Humanitarian Project Plan developed with the International Committee of the Red Cross, which would conduct investigations to identify the remains of Argentine soldiers buried in Darwin cemetery, marked another important advance and the culmination of efforts launched by the Argentine Government in 2012. Such valiant efforts demonstrated the improvement of bilateral relations between the two countries; it was nonetheless necessary to continue working towards a peaceful and durable solution to the dispute.

30. Costa Rica continued to support a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution in Western Sahara, in line with the principles and provisions of international law that governed the decolonization process. There must be a direct link between sovereignty and democracy, and the United Nations must facilitate the resolution of the international disputes on its agenda in accordance with the values of democracy, human rights and justice, ensuring that the right to self-determination applied to all peoples. Costa Rica supported all efforts to achieve a world free of colonialism in all its forms and manifestations.

31. **Mr. Arriola Ramírez** (Paraguay) said that colonialism was a vestige of old power structures that had harmed many and benefited few. Paraguay remained

committed to the decolonization process, which had allowed a number of countries to join the United Nations as sovereign States. Nonetheless, the scourge of colonialism lived on, as attested to by the existence of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, most of which were in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

32. Paraguay supported the principle of self-determination for the original populations of colonized territories and, while it understood the difficulty of balancing the interests of the original population, the population implanted by colonization and the administering Power, the United Nations must act in line with its doctrine, which clearly gave precedence to the rights of indigenous populations. Visible progress had been made in the decolonization process, thanks largely to the political will of States. However, the decolonization process went beyond the efforts of any particular Government and was not a government initiative; instead, it was a social demand rooted in the political aspirations of indigenous peoples. General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV) were the most useful and transparent instruments for guaranteeing the full exercise of sovereignty, integration or autonomy.

33. His delegation reiterated its support for the legitimate rights of the Argentine Republic in the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom should resume negotiations as soon as possible in order to find a lasting and peaceful solution to the prolonged controversy. His delegation commended the continued willingness of the Argentine Government to explore all avenues towards a peaceful solution to the dispute, as well its constructive attitude in favour of the inhabitants of the Malvinas Islands.

34. **Ms. Williams** (Grenada) said that her country recognized the extraordinary significance of the Committee's work, having gone through the decolonization process itself. In particular, Grenada supported the political process led by the Security Council since 2007 aimed at achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution to the question of the Western Sahara. In that regard, it welcomed the Moroccan autonomy initiative presented to the Security Council in 2007, which represented a serious and credible solution to the dispute.

35. Her delegation supported the appointment of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, Mr. Köhler, which further underscored that achieving a political solution to the long-standing dispute and enhanced cooperation between the member States of the Maghreb Arab Union would contribute to stability and security in the Sahel region. Grenada welcomed the regional and legislative elections held in Morocco, including in the Sahara, in 2015 and 2016, respectively, as well as the measures taken by Morocco to promote and protect human rights, in particular through its interactions with the Special Procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council. Her delegation supported Security Council resolution 2351 (2017), including its call for consideration of a refugee registration in the Tindouf refugee camps.

36. **Mr. Barros Melet** (Chile) said that the administering Powers should take the measures necessary to ensure that a rapid process of decolonization could be completed for the 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, and should transmit adequate information on the Territories under their control in accordance with Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations.

37. The question of the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas was a special and particular colonial situation involving a sovereignty dispute. Chile reaffirmed the legitimate rights of Argentina over those Islands and maritime areas, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, and urged Argentina and the United Kingdom to resume negotiations with a view to reaching a solution as soon as possible. His delegation called on the Secretary-General to continue his mission of good offices with a view to reaching a peaceful settlement of the dispute and to communicate the progress made thus far, and it highlighted the willingness of Argentina to negotiate a lasting solution. Lastly, his country praised the Department of Public Information for its efforts to disseminate the work of the Special Committee, inter alia by keeping the United Nations decolonization website updated in all six official languages.

38. **Mr. Skinner-Klée** (Guatemala) said that, through numerous resolutions over the course of more than fifty years, the General Assembly had recognized the sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas as a "special and particular" colonial situation, because of its distinctive characteristics. The territorial integrity of Argentina had been violated in 1833 through the forced occupation of part of its

territory and the displacement of the population. Since then, Argentine settlement in the Malvinas Islands had been prevented, and the occupying Power had transferred some of its own population to that part of Argentine soil. The case thus involved a colonized territory, not a colonized people. In keeping with paragraph 6 of the Declaration on decolonization, the United Nations had therefore specifically ruled out the possibility of applying the right to self-determination to the question of the Malvinas Islands. That year marked the fifty-second anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX). Argentina had already indicated its willingness to resolve the situation through dialogue and negotiation, and the United Kingdom should play its part to find a just, peaceful and lasting solution that would benefit both parties to the dispute.

39. Guatemala fully supported all General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on the question of Western Sahara and reiterated its support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to help the parties find a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution to the conflict. It urged the parties to continue to show political will and establish a climate conducive to dialogue, in order to enter into a more substantive phase of negotiations. A solution to the question was necessary, not only for the people of Western Sahara, but also for the stability, security and integrity of the Maghreb region.

40. **Mr. Djani** (Indonesia) said that, with the end of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism fast approaching, it was essential to focus on the 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. His delegation appreciated the Organization's ongoing efforts, including the visiting missions and annual regional seminars organized by the Special Committee, which provided the necessary platforms to disseminate updated information on the political, social and economic situation in the Territories. Given the challenges of climate change and natural disasters, United Nations bodies including the regional commissions should continue to provide technical assistance to the populations of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. His delegation welcomed the steps taken to strengthen dialogue between the Special Committee and the various administering Powers and other relevant stakeholders.

41. Only by focusing on the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, without shifting to other, unlisted territories, would solutions be found which were acceptable to all relevant parties. The international community, including all administering Powers and Territories, must collaborate intensively. In that regard, visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories were an effective means of assessing the situation on the ground, and administering Powers should therefore facilitate those missions on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/231.

42. As enshrined in paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), the national unity and territorial integrity of independent States must always be respected. The particular circumstances surrounding individual Territories must therefore be examined carefully, on a case-by-case basis, as a one-size-fits-all approach to finding solutions could not and should not be pursued. All relevant parties should engage in genuine dialogue, either bilaterally or within the relevant United Nations forums, with a view to finding solutions that were mutually acceptable to all.

43. **Ms. Young** (Belize) said that more than 50 of the current Member States, including her country, had achieved independence thanks to the support of the United Nations. However, the decolonization process was currently at a standstill, as evidenced by the number of Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Caribbean. Notwithstanding their current political status, many of those Territories enjoyed associate membership in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States. Belize supported the people of those Territories in their struggle for self-determination and had recently provided financial assistance for hurricane victims through its emergency management agency and regional risk insurance facility.

44. Belize supported the Sahrawi people in their unrelenting pursuit for self-determination, and her delegation was concerned at the palliative treatment of the question of Western Sahara by the United Nations. The Sahrawi people had been promised a referendum 25 years earlier, and had accepted a ceasefire on the basis of that United Nations promise. The overarching aim of MINURSO was to conduct a referendum, but that promise was currently buried by resolutions and extensions of its mandate, a status quo that was maintained at the cost of basic human rights. Western Sahara was the last Territory in Africa awaiting decolonization. Belize therefore welcomed the appointment of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General and hoped that his mission would bring about a peaceful and lasting solution that fully respected the

inalienable right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination.

45. **Mr. Gertze** (Namibia) said that his delegation welcomed the appointment of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara as the question of the Western Sahara had been at a standstill for too long. It hoped that the return of Morocco to the African Union would bring that long-standing issue to a close given that all States members of the Union had committed, in accordance with the Constitutive Act of the Union, to respect the borders existing on achievement of independence.

46. His country's struggle for independence shared important similarities with the case of Western Sahara. As a former colony of South Africa which had experienced a successful independence election supervised by the United Nations as part of its decolonization process, Namibia did not understand why one African country refused to implement the United Nations resolutions to which it had agreed. The Government of Morocco should support the holding of a supervised referendum so that the people of Western Sahara could exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. African Union members should stand firm on the principles of the Constitutive Act and should urge Morocco to comply with the United Nations resolutions calling for a referendum.

47. The Sahel region would derive great economic benefit from a solution to the question of Western Sahara, and the departure of MINURSO would alleviate fears of radicalized youth and potential for war in the region. Such improvements would enable significant progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in both Morocco and Western Sahara. It was baffling that Security Council resolution 658 (1990) had still not been implemented and that a supervised referendum had still not been held. Namibia reaffirmed its full and unequivocal support for the inalienable rights of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination and national independence, and called on the United Nations, especially the Security Council, to assume full responsibility for implementing all resolutions and decisions on Western Sahara with no preconditions.

48. **Mr. Arcia Vivas** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that colonialism constituted an anachronistic and flagrant violation of the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and was an affront to human dignity. As the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism neared its end, urgent action was needed and all relevant parties must assume their responsibilities and ensure that the people of the 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories could express their will regarding the options for self-determination, including independence, on a case-by-case basis. The Special Committee must intensify its efforts to ensure full implementation of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), and the administering Powers should fulfil their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations by ensuring the well-being of the people in the Territories under their control while taking concrete steps towards ending political subordination.

49. Amidst the economic and social hardships exacerbated by the imposition of the Financial Oversight and Management Board, Puerto Rico had experienced a moment of hope when the political prisoner Oscar López Rivera had been released after 36 years of incarceration in the United States. However, Puerto Rico remained in a shameful state of tutelage that seriously limited its potential for development. The United States Government should respect the justified demands of the people of Puerto Rico to fully exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration on decolonization, and Member States should support efforts to include the question of Puerto Rico on the agenda of the General Assembly.

50. Venezuela reiterated its support for Argentina in its just claim concerning the occupation of the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas by the United Kingdom, in contravention of international law. The United Nations considered the question of the Malvinas to be a violation of the territorial integrity of the Argentine Republic and therefore a sovereignty dispute between the two States concerned, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX). Consequently, the principle of self-determination did not apply. The Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom should resume negotiations in order to find a peaceful and negotiated solution to the dispute in accordance with international law.

51. His delegation reiterated its support for the people of Western Sahara in their struggle for self-determination and independence. The parties should work to find a just, lasting and definitive solution to that colonial situation in accordance with Security Council resolution 690 (1991) and the still applicable General

Assembly resolution 34/37 from 1979. It was hoped that the recently appointed Personal Envoy for Western Sahara would help to restart the negotiation process driven by the United Nations, with a view to organizing the long-awaited referendum on self-determination, and that the African Union would continue to play a significant role in eradicating colonialism in Western Sahara.

52. With regard to the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Pacific region, the administering Powers had a duty to ensure that the people exercising their right to self-determination in referendums or other political process were in fact those qualified to do so. His delegation hoped that the upcoming referendum in New Caledonia would ensure the full participation of the Kanak population. In the case of Guam, the administering Power should listen to the concerns expressed by the Chamorro people regarding their right to organize a consultation with a view to determining their future political status.

53. Administering Powers must refrain from exploiting the natural resources of Non-Self-Governing Territories; altering the demographic, political, economic, social and cultural composition of those Territories in their favour; and using military bases that posed a threat to the security of those populations. With regard to the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Caribbean, the administering Powers should fulfil their responsibilities to ensure the well-being of those populations after the recent hurricanes.

54. The fifty years of Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory were a stain upon the reputation of the United Nations, as well as the latter's capacity for resolving the conflict. The oppression of Palestinians was shameful, unacceptable and unsustainable, and the Israeli colonialism violated international law. Israel must return the Occupied Palestinian Territories to the people of Palestine and pave the way for a process that would culminate in a just, lasting and peaceful two-State solution that respected the pre-1967 borders and included an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

55. **Mr. Rai** (Papua New Guinea) said that the future status of the remaining 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories must be urgently decided by the United Nations, in consultation with their respective administering Powers, and all Member States should respect the dignity, human rights and liberty of those long-suffering peoples. His country supported free and transparent self-determination, whether through plebiscites or negotiated political settlements, so long as those outcomes were accepted by all interested parties in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

56. New Caledonia was at a critical stage in its decolonization process, with a referendum on self-determination scheduled to take place in 2018 following 165 years of colonialism. The administering Power, Territorial Government and people of New Caledonia must ensure that the serious concerns identified by the 2014 United Nations Visiting Mission to New Caledonia regarding the electoral process were addressed before the referendum was held. It was concerning that a sizeable segment of the population was still excluded from the electoral list. For the outcome of the referendum to be respected by the people of New Caledonia, the integrity and credibility of the referendum electoral process must be beyond reproach. The referendum issue must also be framed in a simple and easily understood fashion amidst a peaceful environment conducive to the conduct of a historic event.

57. With regard to French Polynesia, his delegation urged the two sides to continue dialogue in order to find a peaceful way forward. Any actions taken by the Fourth Committee or the Special Committee must respect the will of the people of French Polynesia. His delegation recognized that Tokelau was an exemplary case of how decolonization should operate and his country would continue to work with the administering Power and the people of the Territory to reach an amicable settlement of its future status.

58. His country supported the ongoing constructive political process regarding Western Sahara held under the auspices of the Secretary-General, who had recently called for a high-level negotiated political settlement in a spirit of compromise, consistent with Security Council resolution 2351 (2017) and its predecessors. It was hoped that his new Personal Envoy would contribute in an impartial fashion to finding a lasting and peaceful political solution. The Moroccan autonomy initiative was consistent with Security Council resolutions and the spirit of compromise. Sizeable investments had recently been made by Morocco in Western Sahara, thus creating greater economic opportunities and jobs in that region. Refugees in the Tindouf camps must be registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in accordance with the recommendations of the Secretary-General and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

59. **Mr. Rivero Rosario** (Cuba) said that it was regrettable that, 56 years after the adoption of General

Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), the peoples of 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories were still subjected to the tragedy of colonialism on a daily basis. His delegation also drew attention to the occupation of Palestine, whose people had the inalienable right to self-determination and to the existence of an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital. The United Nations and the Security Council in particular must ensure that the Palestinian people did not suffer another 50 years of foreign occupation.

60. Cuba upheld the right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara and reiterated its support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara to achieve a mutually acceptable political solution, in the context of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), which would foster regional and international peace and security. Cuba also unrestrictedly supported the legitimate right of Argentina in the sovereignty dispute relating to the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, which were part of Argentine territory. A negotiated, just and definitive solution that took into account both the territorial integrity of Argentina and the interests of the inhabitants of the Islands should be found as soon as possible. The two parties should refrain from any unilateral acts that could change the situation of the Islands while the negotiation process was under way.

61. It had been 117 years since the United States had colonized Puerto Rico, and over 40 since the question had first been brought before the Special Committee, leading to the successive adoption of 36 resolutions and decisions. The latest resolution called on the Government of the United States once again to assume its responsibility and expedite a process that would allow the Puerto Rican people to fully exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).

62. The Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act passed by the President of the United States did not address the serious economic and social problems facing the island, and the Financial Oversight and Management Board imposed by the United States Government infringed on the already limited powers of the Government of Puerto Rico and had forced it to make budget cuts. The Supreme Court of the United States had itself recognized that Puerto Rico remained subject to the full powers of the United States. The island was facing a grave humanitarian crisis following a number of hurricanes and the inadequate response of the colonial Government was shocking. His delegation supported the calls from CELAC and the members of the Non-Aligned Movement for an end to colonialism in the region.

63. Despite the brutal economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba, his Government was committed to solidarity with other peoples and collaborated with the Non-Self-Governing Territories to the best of its ability, for example by enabling hundreds of young men and women from Western Sahara to study in Cuba. His delegation urged other Member States to increase such cooperation, which was essential to the economic and social development of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

64. **Mr. Morejón Pazmiño** (Ecuador) said that the United Nations had an essential role to play in eradicating colonialism and all Member States should be involved in the work of the Special Committee instead of it being the isolated work of just 29 countries. For 30 years, administering Powers had been urged to find just and negotiated solutions to eliminate the scourge of colonialism, which violated the human rights of the inhabitants of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Such solutions should be underpinned by two fundamental legal concepts — territorial integrity and the right to self-determination — which should be applied on a case-by-case-basis. All peoples, including those of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, had the right to self-determination under the Charter of the United Nations.

65. Ecuador reiterated its support for the legitimate rights of Argentina in the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The way to put an end to that special and particular colonial situation was the peaceful and negotiated settlement of the dispute by the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom. His delegation hoped that the Secretary-General would use his good offices to help find a definitive solution.

66. The people of Western Sahara were the only people in the region that had been unable to freely exercise their right to self-determination. Ecuador endorsed all resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council regarding Western Sahara since 2007 with a view to achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in the context of arrangements consistent with the principles and purposes of the

Charter of the United Nations. In that regard, his delegation welcomed the appointment of the Personal Envoy to the Secretary-General.

67. The Special Committee had repeatedly declared that the Puerto Rican people formed a Latin American and Caribbean nation with its own unique national identity, and had urged the United States Government to accelerate the process of enabling the Puerto Rican people to fully exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. Puerto Rico should remain on Special Committee's agenda. With regard to Gibraltar, the proposal put forth by Spain for joint sovereignty was an innovative step towards finding a viable solution. Ecuador would continue to support all constructive and negotiated efforts by the parties to resolve the issue in a manner that respected the interests of the Gibraltarian population and was in conformity with international law and in the spirit of the Brussels Agreement. So long as certain populations remained under colonial rule, there would be the potential for conflict that threatened not only international peace and security, but also the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Although natural disasters could not be controlled, political will and solidarity could achieve the well-being of people worldwide.

68. **Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua) said that the decolonization of the remaining 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories was the most urgent matter to address before the close of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. The peoples of those Territories must be able to exercise their right to self-determination and independence, and must not be excluded from the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the principle of leaving no one behind. Having long fought for its independence, Nicaragua fully supported the liberation of all peoples and hoped that the colonizing Powers would increase their cooperation with the Special Committee. More than half of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories were in the Latin American and Caribbean region, including the special cases of Puerto Rico and the Malvinas Islands, and his country hoped to contribute to the decolonization process by sharing its experiences and promoting the principles of peace, harmony, dialogue, unity and consensus.

69. Nicaragua supported the legitimate sovereignty rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, and welcomed the willingness of the Argentine Government to set in place arrangements for the resumption of dialogue with the United Kingdom with a view to finding a definitive solution to the sovereignty dispute. The United Kingdom should immediately comply with United Nations resolutions and should begin direct negotiations with Argentina.

70. Puerto Rico was a Latin American and Caribbean nation that needed the support of its neighbours more than ever before, being gravely affected by recent hurricanes and economic troubles. The colonial Power should resolve the situation through dialogue and negotiation. The need to decolonize Puerto Rico had become even more urgent in light of the country's inability to cope with natural disasters and its serious debt situation, which directly affected the socioeconomic condition of Puerto Ricans as well as their ability to achieve sustainable development.

71. Nicaragua supported the Sahrawi people in their struggle for self-determination and independence, and it was hoped that negotiations between the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic and Morocco would be resumed soon and would lead to a referendum sponsored by the United Nations. Efforts to find a peaceful solution must be intensified, as new hostilities would be catastrophic.

Requests for hearings

72. **The Chair** drew attention to 157 requests for hearings under agenda item 62, 16 relating to French Polynesia (A/C.4/72/2), one relating to Gibraltar (A/C.4/72/3), 16 relating to Guam (A/C.4/72/4), six relating to New Caledonia (A/C.4/72/5), one relating to Turks and Caicos (A/C.4/72/6) and 117 relating to Western Sahara (A/C.4/72/7). He took it that the Committee wished to grant those requests.

73. *It was so decided.*

Statements made in exercise of the right to reply

74. **Ms. Hourmouzios** (United Kingdom) said that her country had no doubt regarding its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and the South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and surrounding maritime areas, or regarding the right of the Falkland Islanders to self-determination in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the two International Covenants on human rights, in order freely to determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development. Therefore, no dialogue on sovereignty was possible unless the Falkland Islanders so wished.

The 2013 referendum, in which 99.8 per cent of the participants had voted to remain an overseas territory of the United Kingdom, had sent a clear message that the people of the Islands did not want a dialogue on sovereignty. Argentina should respect those wishes. The United Kingdom maintained a modern relationship with the Falkland Islands and all its overseas territories, based on partnership, shared values and the right of the people of each Territory to determine their own future. Argentina continued to deny that such fundamental human rights applied to the people of the Falkland Islands, which contravened the principles of the Charter. None of the regional statements expressing diplomatic support for sovereignty negotiations and United Nations resolutions modified or diluted the obligation of nations to respect the legally binding principle of self-determination.

75. The United Kingdom was also clear that no civilian population had been expelled from the Falkland Islands in 1833. An Argentine military garrison had been sent there earlier in an attempt to impose Argentine sovereignty over British sovereign territory, but the United Kingdom had expelled that military garrison, and the civilian population that had previously sought British permission to remain had been encouraged to do so. The territorial borders of the Argentine Republic in 1833 had not included the southern half of its current form or any territory in the Falkland Islands, Antarctica or South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. The province of Tierra del Fuego, to which Argentina claimed the disputed Territories belonged, had only become part of Argentina circa 1883, whereas British sovereignty over the Falkland Islands dated back to 1765, some years before the Argentine Republic had even existed. The United Kingdom had never implanted any civilian population; all civilians had been born there or had migrated voluntarily from various countries, including Argentina, during the nineteenth century. The Argentine claim to the Islands, based on the principle of disruption of its territorial integrity, was without foundation, as the Islands had never legitimately been administered by or formed part of the sovereign territory of the Republic of Argentina.

76. With regard to Gibraltar, the United Kingdom had sovereignty over Gibraltar and the territorial waters surrounding it and, as a separate Territory recognized by the United Nations, Gibraltar enjoyed the rights accorded to it by the Charter of the United Nations, including the right to self-determination. The 2006 Gibraltar Constitution, which had been endorsed by the people of Gibraltar in a referendum, provided for a modern and mature relationship between Gibraltar and the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom would not enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another State against their democratically expressed wishes and would not enter into sovereignty negotiations which they opposed. The United Kingdom was committed to safeguarding Gibraltar, its people and its economy. It was also firmly committed to the Trilateral Forum for Dialogue, which was the most credible means of strengthening relations between the United Kingdom, Gibraltar and Spain for the benefit of all parties. Constructive and responsive engagement at the political level would enhance local cooperation and it was therefore regrettable that Spain had formally withdrawn from those talks in 2012.

77. **Mr. Mazzeo** (Argentina) said that his delegation reaffirmed the statements made by the Vice-President of Argentina at the current session of the General Assembly and by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Argentina before the Special Committee in June 2017. The Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas were an integral part of the national territory of Argentina. The Islands had been illegally occupied by the United Kingdom and were therefore the subject of a sovereignty dispute that was recognized by a number of international organizations and by successive General Assembly resolutions calling on the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to resume negotiations in order to find a peaceful and lasting solution to the dispute as soon as possible. That position had also been endorsed by the Special Committee and the Organization of American States.

78. Argentina regretted the attempts of Great Britain to conceal the act of usurpation it had committed in 1833, which had been repeatedly protested by Argentina. Those attempts to distort history revealed the lack of certainty of the United Kingdom about the lawfulness of its position with respect to the status of the archipelagos concerned. Instead of trying to refute historical facts whose occurrence it had already acknowledged, the United Kingdom should honour the commitment it had made to seek a just and definitive solution to the sovereignty dispute through bilateral negotiations with Argentina, in compliance with General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX).

79. The principle of self-determination, which was the only basis invoked by the United Kingdom in support of its position, was manifestly inapplicable to the dispute

in question, as affirmed by the General Assembly and in statements adopted by multilateral forums. The illegitimate vote in the Malvinas Islands was a unilateral action undertaken by the United Kingdom that did not resolve the dispute or affect the inalienable rights of Argentina or the work of the Special Committee. The so-called referendum had been a tautological exercise in which British subjects had been asked whether they wished to remain British, and could not resolve the sovereignty dispute. Allowing the British inhabitants of the Islands to arbitrate in a sovereignty dispute to which their own country was a party distorted the right to self-determination of peoples, given that the people of the Islands were not subjected to subjugation, domination or exploitation by a colonial Power. The interests of the inhabitants of the Malvinas Islands were adequately addressed by resolutions of the General Assembly and by the Constitution of Argentina. Lastly, Argentina reiterated its legitimate sovereignty rights over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.